

SEPTEMBER 6, 2002

SCHAKOWSKY: "AT THIS TIME, I AM VIGOROUSLY OPPOSED TO WAR WITH IRAQ"

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Thousands of constituents have contacted me to express concern over a possible U.S. attack on Iraq. I agree that President Bush should not unilaterally undertake such an action.

At this time, I am vigorously opposed to war with Iraq. I strongly believe that, at a minimum, President Bush must consult the American people and seek the express consent of the Congress should he decide that military action against Iraq is necessary to guarantee our national security. In July, I joined a number of my colleagues in writing to the President to demand that he first receive such authorization before any further military actions in Iraq.

In addition to obtaining approval from the Congress, the President must take into account several other factors and answer important questions that include:

- The potential response by our allies and adversaries in the Middle East and around the world: An attack on Iraq at this time has the potential to severely destabilize an already inflamed region and may actually endanger the United States, our brave men and women in military service, and our allies. A unilateral U.S. decision to attack Iraq may have the effect of uniting the Arab world, and other important partners in the ongoing war on terrorism, against us.

- The President has yet to present to the Congress or the American people information that distinguishes Iraq as a unique threat: While Saddam Hussein is a dangerous dictator who has done terrible things in the past and who has sought weapons of mass destruction, he is not alone. There are a number of other nations that fit a similar mold and I have not been given information that suggests Iraq is any more of a threat than one of those nations. The notion of attacking a nation that has not committed an act of aggression against the United States in a unilateral manner, is contrary to what most Americans and the international community consider common sense and reasonable policy.

- Timing: One recurring question that constituents have asked me is, "why now"? I am not aware of any information that makes a stronger case for attacking Iraq now. The Bush Administration has not provided Congress with new information that demonstrates a new, imminent threat from Iraq to our nation that warrants a military response.

- A *successful* military action in Iraq cannot be guaranteed: There is no doubt that

the United States will ultimately be the victor in a military confrontation with Iraq, but at what cost? In recent years, the conflicts in which the U.S. has been engaged have been almost bloodless. However, once an attack on Iraq is launched complete with hundreds of thousands of ground troops, Saddam Hussein will have no incentive to refrain from using his chemical and biological as well as conventional weapons against our troops and against Israel. Casualties are inevitable. I am not willing to risk the lives of our brave service personnel in Iraq at this time. My position has been reinforced by testimony at a recent congressional hearing about an investigation, which demonstrated that 800,000 chemical and biological warfare protection suits purchased by the Pentagon have been proven faulty and, while 1.2 million new suits have been purchased, no one knows for sure where they are because Department of Defense inventory control is haphazard or non-existent.□

- What is the post-Saddam scenario? Removing Saddam Hussein is one thing; guaranteeing a successful and stable successor government is another. I have not been made aware of any credible or likely successor government that suggests a better life for the people of Iraq or a guarantee of greater security for our nation and the world. If the U.S. can't easily bring about stability in Afghanistan, a country in which I supported U.S. intervention, what will it take to do so in Iraq? How long will the U.S. have to maintain a presence there?

- War with Iraq could over-extend our forces and may undermine the broader goals of the war on terrorism: The U.S. now has a presence in several locations around the globe. To what extent can we afford to commit our assets to Iraq and still continue to fulfill the other needs involved in our fight against terrorism and homeland security?

- The war with Iraq will cost billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars: The 1991 war with Iraq was largely financed by our allies. If we go it alone this time, can we afford the billions of dollars it will cost?□□

While I do believe that Saddam Hussein is a dangerous individual and that he must be contained, I believe serious discussion about a major military mobilization against Iraq at this time is inappropriate.□ Instead, the President and the Congress should be investing time, energy and resources in strengthening our international partnerships and working through the United Nations. Dangerous technologies and weapons of mass destruction are likely to remain in existence forever.□ The President should now be focusing his efforts on ways to bring the international community together to condemn their proliferation and those rogue nations and terrorist organizations who would consider their use.

War represents a failure of politics and diplomacy and is always the last resort. War brings with it death, brutality, and emotional and economic losses that no person or nation should ever experience. I will continue to do all that I can to prevent unilateral military action against Iraq by the President and will do my best to share your concerns on this issue with my colleagues in Congress.